Teaching Committee

COORDINATING GROUP FOR SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAMMES

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2005.

Present: Professor T Sheldon (Chair), Ms L Booth (CE), Dr T Boswood (EFL Unit), Mr A Ferguson (York Award), Dr M Ferguson (LFA), Dr S Grace (YCAP), Ms S Hodges (ILIAD)

In attendance: Dr J James (Administrative Officer, Secretary), Ms R Royds (Assistant Registrar) for M05/08

Apologies: Mr O Lisagor/Ms J Winter (GSA)

05/01 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Group approved the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2004.

05/02 Student Representatives

The Group noted that it was disappointed that its student members were unable to attend the meeting, as it valued their contribution. The Manager of the Centre for Continuing Education offered to investigate whether any Continuing Education students might be willing to be co-opted onto the Group.

ACTION: LB

05/03 York Award Advisory Group

Further to M04/22, it was noted that Teaching Committee had approved the terms of reference of the York Award Advisory Group.

05/04 Library Grant for LFA and the EFL Unit
Further to M04/24, it was noted that the Chair, and representatives of LFA and the EFL Unit, had met with the University Librarian. In recognition of the fact that LFA and the EFL Unit had been poorly served, in recent years, in terms of library provision, the Librarian had agreed to use her discretionary fund to purchase texts for LFA and the EFL Unit. The Directors of LFA and the EFL Unit were reminded that they should submit to the Librarian a list of recommended texts (including reference works) as soon as possible.

It was noted that LFA and the EFL Unit’s future acquisition requests would need to be routed via the Department for Language and Linguistic Science or the Department for Education Studies, respectively.

It was further noted that library provision was an issue of interest to other members of the Group. For example, the Director of YCAP, commented that departments could be reluctant to divert library funds from their 'core' students to those of the supplementary programme areas within their control. The Manager of the Centre for Continuing Education noted that the Centre did not have a library budget and had to rely, therefore, on the goodwill of the Library and external sources of funding.

**ACTION: MF and TB**

[Secretary’s note: subsequent to the meeting, LFA submitted its list of recommended texts to the Librarian.]

**05/05 Language Support for Overseas Students**

Further to M04/25, it was noted that the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Group (VCAG) had discussed a range of proposals, put forward by the English Language Working Party (BlGS), including free in-sessional English-language support for students who are non-native speakers. The VCAG had approved the principle underlying the proposals, but had asked the EFL Unit to provide a business case, making explicit
the link to the corporate plan and demonstrating that the scheme would be self-funding.

It was noted that most HEIs offered free English-language support for non-native speakers. There was a danger that if York did not do likewise, it would lose students to its competitors, particularly with the down-turn in the market. The introduction of free English-language support should reduce the burden on academic staff and might therefore encourage departments to recruit more overseas students.

**ACTION: TAS to speak with TB about the business case**

It was further noted that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Learning and Teaching and Research, were considering the issue of support for overseas students in its broadest sense. The University might, for example, create a post to coordinate support for overseas students.

**05/06 Schedule of Teaching Committee Visits**

Further to M04/26, it was decided that:

(a) the Teaching Committee visit to the EFL Unit should be postponed until the Autumn Term of 2005/06. This would allow the new Director of the EFL Unit time to develop a strategic plan for the Unit;

(b) Teaching Committee should visit YCAP in advance of the Higher Education Academy accreditation visit. The HEA visit was scheduled to take place in July 2005, but YCAP had asked for it to be postponed until the Autumn Term of 2005/06.

**ACTION: JJ**

**05/07 ILIAD**

Further to M04/28, it was noted that:
(a) Information Committee had discussed whether the ILIAD for University programme should be provided 'free at the point of delivery' (agendum 2 (f)): the ILIAD team would present a business case to the Committee at its March meeting;

[Secretary's note: the business case was approved at the meeting of Information Committee on 8 March 2005 (M05/34 of Information Committee's minutes refers).]

(b) the question of whether the ECDL might be offered to University students via the Higher York partnership merited further discussion (see also M05/14);

**ACTION: SH to contact Colin Mellors (Chief Executive of Higher York)**

(c) the ILIAD team was attempting to find a suitable diagnostic test for computer skills for new students. The chosen test would be mounted on the University’s VLE.

**05/08 Timetabling and Room Booking**

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Assistant Registrar with responsibility for room booking and timetabling.

In the course of a long discussion, it was **noted** that:

*New protocols for room booking*

- new protocols for booking rooms on the main campus and at King's Manor had been agreed. Space in Chemistry, Alcuin College and King's Manor would be dedicated to teaching throughout the year
- consequently, the Central Timetabling Office would now handle *all* room bookings for teaching purposes (the York Conference Office had previously dealt with room bookings for teaching purposes in vacation periods)
- a copy of the draft protocols is attached for information.

*Annual timetable*
• from 2005/06 an annual timetable would be available: it was hoped that this would make life easier for both staff and students
• a copy of the timeline for the introduction of the new timetable is attached for information
• there was a hierarchy in place for the formation of the timetable and the supplementary programme areas tended to be timetabled after departments (apart from supplementary programme courses that form part of a department’s official provision). Due to timetabling constraints it was not possible to accommodate the wishes of LFA and the EFL Unit for slots to be left open in the timetable to accommodate cross-departmental teaching
• once the timetable for 2005/06 had been published, members of the Group should arrange to meet with the Timetabling Officer if they wished to negotiate any changes.

Quality of rooms

• good quality teaching accommodation was vital to maintain the reputation of the University
• the Timetabling Office was aware that some rooms were of a poor quality and made every effort to avoid using these
• good quality rooms were available in Alcuin College in the evening, subject to payment of a portering charge. If the portering charge could be shared between a number of users then the cost would be dramatically reduced. The Centre for Continuing Education was contemplating making use of Alcuin College in the evening and would welcome other supplementary programme areas to join it on a cost-share basis
• money was available to make minor alterations to teaching rooms. Members of the Group should make their staff aware of the mechanism for reporting room faults (i.e. by filling in a report card for collection by the porter). Alternatively, or if the card system did not appear to be working, members of the Group could contact the Timetabling Officer directly
• members of the Group, and their staff, should have no hesitation in asking porters to tidy rooms
• the Timetabling Office made every attempt to cater for the needs of students with disabilities: problems tended to arise when requests
were (for unavoidable reasons) made at the last minute. In the longer term, work undertaken to meet the requirements of the SENDA legislation should lead to a reduction in access issues

- the Timetabling Office made every attempt to provide rooms with appropriate audio-visual equipment. If rooms without suitable, permanent AV equipment were used in the evenings, difficulties could arise as a result of a lack of AV personnel.

**Availability of rooms**

- the Timetabling Office acknowledged that a lack of rooms/timetable slots could have a negative financial impact on income-generating supplementary programme areas
- the Timetabling Office did its best to be accommodating e.g. by moving bookings when possible
- space was currently at a premium within the University and there was a limited amount that could be done, in the short term, to resolve this issue
- it was important that the design of Heslington East took into account current and future space requirements. The Group emphasised the need for 'flat', flexible rooms for 30/40 and 50/60 people
- an audit by DFM had not revealed a major problem with the 'over booking' of rooms. Members of the Group should report any suspected instances of over booking to the Timetabling Officer.

It was **decided** that:

(a) rooms in the Language Teaching Centre should be placed on the Central Timetabling Office’s database, on the condition that the LFA and EFL Unit retained priority over their use (due to the presence of specialist equipment). This move should benefit both staff and students;

**ACTION: RR**

(b) the Group should review the room booking and timetabling situation in September/October 2005, after the publication of the first annual timetable.
The Group thanked the Assistant Registrar for attending the meeting: it welcomed the opportunity to enter into dialogue with the Timetabling Office. The Group hoped that the Assistant Registrar would be willing to return, at some future stage, for further discussion.

05/09 Car Parking Permits for Tutors from LFA and the Centre for Continuing Education (CE)

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair on the issue of parking permits for tutors from LFA and CE.

At the start of the academic year, LFA and CE tutors were informed that they were no longer eligible for free parking permits. This decision, and the way in which it was communicated, had led the individuals concerned to feel that their work was not valued by the University. However, with action from the Group, the decision was eventually overturned. The case was made that although LFA and CE tutors were registered on the Payroll as 'casual' staff, the vast majority could be classed as employees of the University under the test for an employment contract.

The Transport Working Group, chaired by the PVC for Estates and Buildings, would decide eligibility for parking permits from 2005/06. The Working Group should be made aware of the particular circumstances pertaining to LFA and CE tutors in order to ensure that their eligibility for permits was maintained.

**ACTION: TAS**

05/10 York Award Credits for the ILIAD for University Programme

The Committee considered a proposal from the Director of the York Award to withdraw York Award credits from the ILIAD for University programme. The Director explained that the shift of the York Award’s focus toward employment-related skills meant that it was no longer appropriate for ILIAD for
University (with its focus on academic skills) to be part of the Award's portfolio of elective courses.

The Group approved the proposal. It was noted that students wishing to identify skills developed by the ILIAD for University programme could still do so, as part of their overall York Award application, through the 20 credits available for 'Academic Development'. York Award credits would continue to be awarded for ILIAD for Work.

**05/11 Teaching Committee Visit to the Centre for Continuing Education**

The Committee considered the report of the Teaching Committee visit to the Centre for Continuing Education, and the response from the Centre (agendum 6).

The visit had been a positive occasion for all concerned and, subsequently, progress had been made in a number of the areas identified for further action. It was noted that:

- the University had recognised that the Centre could play an important role in addressing the widening participation agenda, particularly in terms of adult learners
- a new name for the Centre was being considered e.g. the Centre for Lifelong Learning
- the Centre's Board of Studies had assumed responsibility for the Centre's non-accredited programmes
- the Centre was continuing to develop links with academic departments e.g. to provide progression routes for the Centre's students
- staff development needs were being discussed with YCAP and within the Higher York partnership
- plans for a part-time humanities degree were being developed and, if successful, the Centre hoped to appoint a part-time curriculum coordinator
- a widening participation project was being developed with support from Future Prospects
the Centre was able to react to initiatives, on behalf of the University, with great speed where necessary e.g. to provide events for Book Day and Adult Learners’ Week

the Centre was keen to complement the work of Higher York partners, rather than to duplicate their efforts.

**ACTION: LB and TB to discuss issues in common**

**ACTION: members to contact LB if interested in working with Future Prospects**

**05/12 Teaching Committee Visit to Languages for All (LFA)**

The Committee *considered* the report of the Teaching Committee visit to LFA, and the response from LFA (agendum 7). It was *noted* that the report had been very positive about the quality of the provision on offer and the enthusiasm of staff and students.

The visit had been much appreciated by LFA, as it had demonstrated to staff (particularly the part-time tutors) that the University recognised the valuable work being undertaken by LFA. It was *noted* that:

- in terms of the integration of LFA into the Department of Language and Linguistic Science progress had been limited. The Director of LFA was meeting on a monthly basis with the Head of Department, however LFA was still not represented on the Board of Studies. The management of quality assurance of LFA programmes would require further thought and discussion
- LFA was being integrated into the SITS system
- accommodation in the Language Teaching Centre was limited and that the provision of appropriate space for part-time staff reminded an issue
- various administrative and support centres in the University (including Personnel, Payroll, the Library, Computing Service etc.) did not appear to be aware that LFA had moved from the Department of Educational Studies to Language and Linguistic Science
• despite logistic and financial difficulties (M04/06 refers), LFA was introducing a scheme for the peer observation of teaching. The Department of Language and Linguistic Science was not, as yet, willing to offer any assistance

• with respect to the issue of anonymous marking of coursework, the Director explained that this issue was primarily of concern to those tutors who had a background in teaching in schools (where anonymous is not the norm). The Director was of the opinion that the current policy should remain in place.

It was decided that:

(a) difficulties with the integration of LFA into the Department of Language and Linguistic Science should be brought to the attention of Teaching Committee;

**ACTION: TAS**

[Secretary’s note: this action has now been taken.]

(b) the Secretary should get in touch with the various administrative and support centres to inform them of LFA's new departmental relationship;

**ACTION: JJ**

[Secretary’s note: this action has now been taken.]

(c) that there should be no change to LFA's system for anonymous marking. Instead, the Director of LFA should: (i) ensure that all tutors understood that there were good reasons for the policy (logistical and to prevent bias), and (ii) remind tutors that formative assignments provided plentiful opportunities for individualised feedback to students. The Centre for Continuing Education had introduced a system of anonymous marking, against the initial wishes of some tutors, and the Manager of the Centre would be happy to share her experience with the Director of LFA.

**ACTION: MF**
05/13 University Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair on the University's VLE.

It was reported that:

- the University had selected Blackboard Academic Suite and this had now been successfully installed
- implementation would be managed by the VLE Implementation Group
- an academic advisory group would feed the views of staff and student into the VLE implementation: members of the Group would be welcome to put their names forward for this
- departments, centres etc. would be invited to bid for pilot projects in May: members of the Group would be welcome to bid
- by 2008, the VLE should have been rolled-out to all students
- the VLE could help the University to reach out to students on part-time and flexible programmes.

05/14 Strategic Development Fund (SDF) Bids

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair on the University's SDF bids to HEFCE.

Higher York

It was noted that the SDF bid for funding of a second phase of Higher York (the partnership between HE-providers in York) had been approved. Higher York would serve as one of the first 'Lifelong Learning Networks'. There were three work streams: lifelong learning and curriculum, students and the wider community and the Higher York gateway. Major developments would include guaranteed progression routes and a local Credit Accumulation and Transfer scheme. There was potential for many of the supplementary programme areas to become involved in the Higher York initiative and this issue therefore merited further discussion.
**ACTION:** JJ to arrange for Colin Mellors to speak to the Group

*Heslington East*

HEFCE had asked the University for additional information to support the bid. The Vice-Chancellor would be making a presentation to HEFCE shortly and the outcome of the bid should be available soon after. If successful, the bid would underpin the development of the Heslington East campus, expansion into new subject areas (including Film, TV and Theatre) and additional student numbers.

**05/15 Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would be in the Summer Term of 2005.

**ACTION:** JJ

jj/March05